7 STEPS TO WRITING AN EFFECTIVE COMPLAINT
START WITH THE FACTS

- Describe the factual occurrence, and steer clear of conclusions:

TRY: My child is assigned 3 chapters of social studies with questions to answer, 2 reading assignments and 20 math problems almost every day. It takes her approximately 3 hours to complete each night.

AVOID: there is too much homework.
USE TIMELINES

- Quantify: Dates, times, number of occurrences are important. Estimates are okay.

- “I witnessed 3 physical altercations between 8th grade students on the yard at school in October in which no school staff intervened”

- “On November 12, at approximately 2:45pm, John Doe approached Jane Doe and touched her inappropriately”
MINIMIZE THE EMOTION

- This can be difficult
- Emotional language in a complaint undermines its credibility

- TRY: “John was left unattended by his teacher for 40 minutes.”
- AVOID: “Mr. Jones forced John to sit alone in his classroom because he dislikes my son.”
DESCRIBE THE STEPS YOU TOOK TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM

- A crucial step to understand how the process worked once the problem was identified

- Did you or your student report the problem? When?
- When did you meet with school personnel?
- What was the outcome? How long did that take?
- Were you promised any feedback or outcomes? Did these occur?
LIST THE WITNESSES

- What other people saw and did surrounding the incident will help the investigator understand the context

- Names of other students involved
- Names of school teachers, staff or administration involved
- Names of other parents involved
IDENTIFY THE RULE OF CONDUCT OR POLICY VIOLATION

- Determine which rule or policy was violated

- Carefully review of the SFUSD Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook to identify the policy, rule or expectation whose violation most closely describes your issue. See p. 42 of the handbook for Student Bill of Rights & Responsibilities, p. 72 for Discrimination, Harassment or Facility Complaints.

NAME YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME

- An apology?
- A transfer of class or school?
- Expulsion?
- Termination or probation?
- A change in school or district policy?
- Any combination of the above?